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POLYGRAPH TESTS BARRED C.I.A. JOBS

60% of Applicants Rejected
Over 11 Years—Rep. Abzug
to Seek Curb on Devices

By PETER KIHSS

The Central Intelligence Agency has disclosed that more than 60 percent of its job applicants rejected on security grounds from 1963 through mid-1974 were turned down on the basis of polygraph, or lie-detector, interviews.

Representative Bella S. Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan, made public yesterday statements that she had received from the C.I.A., the Defense and Treasury Departments, Federal Reserve Board and Postal Service upholding use of polygraphs for various purposes.

Asserting that "the polygraph cannot distinguish truth from falsehood," Representative Abzug said she had introduced a bill that would make it a criminal offense to administer polygraph tests in connection with jobs in the Federal Government.

She said the bill would also apply to private employers involved in interstate commerce or dealing with the Government.

Mrs. Abzug said the proposed bill would not apply to the use of polygraph tests in criminal investigations.

The statement by George Bush, the new director of Central Intelligence, said that about half of the agency's job applicants rejected because of polygraph test information "had already completed all other security screening and been provisionally approved on this basis."

"Without the polygraph program," Mr. Bush wrote, "the disqualifying information on these cases would have remained unknown. In addition, it is reasonable to presume that the program is a significant deterrent to application for employment by unsuitable candidates, and more importantly, penetration attempts by foreign intelligence services."

Mr. Bush said the agency had "adopted strict procedures to prevent abuses," including notifying each applicant about the use of polygraph tests, medical determination if a polygraph interview is advisable, warning that a privilege against self-incrimination exists, and limiting questions to "security issues."

Mrs. Abzug is chairman of a House subcommittee on Government information and individual rights whose studies led in February to a report by the House Government Operations committee recommending a complete ban on the Federal use of the polygraph and similar lie-detector devices.

Mrs. Abzug said that since the recommendation there had been reports that the C.I.A. had "resumed use of polygraphs for periodic testing of its employees" as a result of unauthorized disclosures from Congressional committees investigating intelligence practices.

Terence E. McClary, Assistant Secretary of Defense, said in a letter to Mrs. Abzug that the Defense Department had moved to upgrade the polygraph program over the last few years and had adopted limitations "to insure the protection of rights of all individuals." He said a new "objective assessment of its utility in the investigative process" was under way.

For the Treasury Department, David R. MacDonald, Assistant Secretary for enforcement operations and tariff affairs, said, "The polygraph is used sparingly by Treasury enforcement agencies as one among many investigative techniques," but

"it is not a general exploratory mechanism."

Arthur F. Burns, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, said polygraph tests were given to employees of four Federal Reserve Banks last year, all in cases involving criminal larceny. Most, he said, were conducted "at the suggestion of or with the concurrence of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Mr. Burns said he believed "polygraph devices should not be used to screen applicants or for other personnel inquiries."

Postmaster General Benjamin F. Bailar said the Postal Inspection tests "in some criminal investigations to narrow a list of suspects after other investigative methods have failed." He said "the greatest benefit" was in clearing innocent employees, and tests were "on a voluntary basis."

Mrs. Abzug said the Justice Department "consistently opposes the admission of polygraph evidence at trials" but sent her "no substantive reply or acknowledgement on her inquiries regarding the device."

Agencies using polygraphs, she said, also include the Customs Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the F.B.I.

The New York Representative cited estimates that 200,000 persons undergo polygraph tests each year in pre-employment or employment situations. Her bill would make its use in such cases a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and allow Federal Court suits for damages.